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commerce: but this, like other overflowing gifts of Providence, seems to be too little regarded—the waste, indeed, in this instance, is sufficient to feed half the human race.

"It is a melancholy reflection, that from man, downwards to the smallest living creature, all are found to prey upon and devour each other. The philosophic mind, however, sees this waste of animal life again and again repaired by fresh stores ever ready to supply the void, and the great work of generation and destruction perpetually going on, and to this dispensation of an all-wise Providence, so interesting to humanity, bows in awful silence.

"In returning from these digressions to the subject of the present inquiry, let the imagination picture to itself countless multitudes of birds, wafted, like the clouds, around the globe, which in ceaseless revolutions turns its convexities to and from the sun, causing thereby a perpetual succession of day and night, summer and winter, and these migrators will be seen to follow its course, and to traverse both hemispheres from pole to pole. To those who, contemplating this world of wonders, extend their views beyond the common gropings of mankind, it will appear that Nature, ever provident that no part of her empire should be unoccupied, has peopled it with creatures of various kinds, and filled every corner of it with animation. To follow her into all her recesses would be an endless task; but so far as these have been explored, every step is marked with pleasantness; and while the reflecting mind, habituated to move in its proper sphere, breaks through the trammels of pride, and removes the films of ignorance, it soars with clearer views towards perfection, and adores that infinite wisdom which appointed and governs the unerring course of all things.

"Thus, the men
Whom nature's works can charm, with God himself
Hold converse; grow familiar, day by day,
With his conceptions; act upon his plan;
And form to his the relish of their souls."—*Akenside*.

THE PELICAN.*

The family of swimming birds to which the pelicans give name is distinguished from all the other subdivisions of that order by the extension of the membrane connecting the three anterior toes in such a manner as to include the posterior also, which is thus brought forward as it were into the same series with the rest. The birds of this family consequently offer the most perfect examples of a completely webbed foot.

In the true pelicans the bill is of great length, broad in proportion, flattened from above downwards, and perfectly straight, with the exception of a slight hook at the middle point of the upper mandible; the edges of both mandibles are entire, being perfectly free from denticulations; and the lower is formed of two long slender flexible branches, united together only at the tip, and having the intermediate space occupied by a widely dilatable membranous pouch, which extends for some distance down the fore part of the neck. The middle part of the upper mandible forms a slight projection, bounded on either side by a narrow groove, in which, near the base of the bill, are situated the almost imperceptible nostrils; the eyes are surrounded by a naked space continuous with the base of the bill; the neck is rather long; the body large; the legs short, and naked above the knee; and the wings of moderate length, with the first quill-feathers the longest. The tongue is so short, as to have been entirely overlooked by the earlier writers.

The white or common pelican is, as the first of these names implies, almost entirely white when in its adult state. The quill-feathers, however, which are scarcely visible when the wings are closed, are black; and the whole plumage, as the bird advances in age, exhibits a slight tinge of flesh-colour, which is sometimes mixed with a shade of light yellow.

When fully grown, the common pelican is almost the largest bird of its order, measuring from five to six feet from the extremity of its long bill to the tip of its rounded

tail, and from ten to twelve in the expanse of its wings. The extent of these latter organs, together with the extreme lightness of the bony structure, (which is capable of receiving a large quantity of air,) enables the bird to soar to a very considerable height, and to remain long upon the wing. Its bill, frequently sixteen or eighteen inches in length, and two or even more in breadth, has but little strength; but the fish on which it preys are immediately consigned to its pouch, in which it speedily accumulates a sufficient store to serve it for a meal, and then retires to some neighbouring rock to satisfy its voracity, which is by no means trifling, from the contents of its wallet. This part is so highly distensible, as to be capable of containing from two to three gallons of water. It serves also as a reservoir for the food which the old birds bring home to their young, and which they disgorge into the throats of the latter by pressing the bill upon the breast; an action that has given rise to the fable of the pelican feeding its young with its blood. In the same manner the males supply the wants of the females when sitting.

The white pelicans nest in rocks on the shores of the sea, of large rivers, and of lakes, in almost every part of the old world, excepting the most northern regions. Buffon gives a curious account of the manner in which they sometimes act in concert when in pursuit of their finny prey. They form themselves into a circular line, and when they have thus encompassed a shoal of fishes, suddenly plunge into the water, seize upon their victims, fill their pouches with the spoil, and fly to the land, where they devour it at their leisure. This fact is confirmed by some late observations of M. Roulin upon an American species. The latter adds, that when a single pelican is in search of food, it wheels round and round at the height of fifteen or twenty feet, and as soon as it perceives a fish, darts upon it from above with inconceivable rapidity, displacing the water around it for a considerable distance. Should it fail in its attack, which rarely happens, it rises again to repeat the same manœuvre.

In captivity the pelicans, like most of the swimming birds, are perfectly contented, harmless, and familiar. Their flesh is said to be far from palatable.

The specimen in the collection at the Dublin Zoological Gardens struck the sail of a vessel in the Dardanelles during a fog, and fell stunned upon the deck; it was brought home by the captain, and purchased from him for the Society.

THE WHALE FISHERY—CAPTAIN ROSS.

For many years a great change has been taking place in the habits of those stupendous creatures which draw the enterprise of the merchants and mariners of England and Scotland into the Arctic seas. When the fishery commenced, they were so tame that they were found floating in all the gulfs and bays of Spitzbergen, fearless of harm, and were taken by hundreds, and without an effort. In a few years, however, this dreadful destruction drove them to the more remote bays, from whence they were soon driven into the open sea, far away from land. But the trackless ocean afforded them no shelter from their enemies; they were pursued, and that with so much resolution, that the Dutch alone are calculated to have destroyed upwards of fifty thousand in no very long course of years. Retiring before their ruthless pursuers, they next took refuge along the line of perpetual ice, which was their habit when Scoresby wrote his celebrated work. Here as many as fourteen hundred of them were killed in one year. At last, worn out by perpetual persecution, they have plunged into the regions of eternal ice, where the boldest whaler dares not pursue them. The consequence is, that the Greenland Fishery, which was formerly carried on in the sea between Greenland and Spitzbergen, is nearly abandoned, and the whole trade would soon have been at an end, if Ross had not penetrated in his first voyage through the mass of ice which renders the entrance to Baffin's bay so hazardous, and opened to the whalers vast seas never before fished in, and which the monsters of the deep are found to frequent in great numbers. The most northern part of Baffin's bay, together

* See engraving in our first page.